



## Press Release – *FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*

*August 16, 2007*

### **Salvadorans still prefer democracy, but expect performance improvement**

**SAN SALVADOR**– Over half of the Salvadoran population is dissatisfied with the functioning of democracy even though the majority prefers that form of government, revealed the study, “The Political Culture of Democracy in El Salvador: 2006.” The study was carried out by the Dr. Guillermo Manuel Ungo Foundation (FUNDAUNGO) and the University Public Opinion Institute (IUDOP) at the Universidad Centroamericana “José Simeón Cañas” (UCA), coordinated by Vanderbilt University’s Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP), and financed by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

The study, designed to assess the political culture of democracy in El Salvador and compare it with results of previous years, is based on a public opinion poll carried out June-July 2006 to a base of 1,729 Salvadoran adults, with 95% accuracy and a margin of plus or minus 2.4%.

The study shows that Salvadorans keep supporting the idea of a democratic regime: 87.6% prefer elected democracy whereas 12.4% would support a non-elected strong leader, that is most people prefer to choose their leaders by voting instead of having a strong leader governing by force. Moreover, 72.7% prefer democracy as a form of government, 12.4% prefer an authoritarian government, and 14.9% are indifferent. By comparing these data with a survey carried out in 2004, there has been a slight increase in the authoritarian and indifferent responses.

Opinions about the functioning of democracy were also surveyed: 53.4% feel dissatisfied or very dissatisfied whereas 46.6% feel satisfied or very satisfied. Compared to 2004 levels, the dissatisfaction with the functioning of democracy has grown.

Violence, crime and insecurity are pointed out as El Salvador’s main problems by 44.5% of the Salvadorans interviewed, whereas 45.2% are more concerned about economic issues (poverty, unemployment, inflation, economy, etc.). Along these lines, 47.1% feel either little or not at all secure regarding the possibility of facing an act of crime. Data show that 15.6% of Salvadorans have been direct victims in assaults and thefts this year even though the percentage has decreased in comparison to the

percentage in 2004. Most people (69.1%) do not denounce acts of crime essentially because they think there is no use or because they are afraid to do it. Moreover, 65.8% of the Salvadorans interviewed trust either little or not at all in that the judicial system would punish criminals if they are victims in an act of crime. Distrust has increased in comparison to 2004 data.

The report also states that “problems created by crime and insecurity contribute to eroding public trust in institutions, the legitimacy of the political system and the appraisal on the functioning of democracy.”

The study was presented to the public on Thursday, August 16, by authors Ricardo Córdova, Director of FUNDAUNGO, and José Miguel Cruz, researcher at IUDOP-UCA and Vanderbilt University. The study was commented by Carlos Briones, Director of FLACSO-El Salvador Program; Claudia Umaña, Director of the Legal Studies Department of the Foundation for Economic and Social Development (FUSADES); and Sandra de Barraza, Coordinator of the National Commission for Development. USAID Mission Director Deborah Kennedy-Iraheta attended the presentation, as well as representatives of the Salvadoran government, non-government organizations, unions, universities and civil society.

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